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USP Law Library

NSW John Hutley, formerly of the Law Courts Library has been appointed Law Librarian at the University of the South Pacific, Port Vila, Vanuatu. John, who previously visited the Law Courts' twin library in the Cook Islands, hopes to move to Vila in April. He replaces John Bahrij who is now Law Librarian at Bond University.

Chief Justice of Solomon Islands

Chief Justice Muria visited Canberra in February to attend the swearing-in of Justice Kirby, the latest appointment to the High Court of Australia. Justice Kirby had recently sat on the Court of Appeal for Solomon Islands.

Federation Press Gift

Federation Press have again donated a number of books for the Twinning Programme. The books were despatched in February to the court libraries in Kiribati and Solomon Islands, and to university libraries in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. Two other libraries in Papua New Guinea also benefited. Many thanks to Federation Press again for thinking of the Pacific libraries and for taking the trouble to despatch the books to Canberra for distribution.

Tonga

From charcoal to library in six months

In May last year, when I heard that the Tongan Supreme Court Library had been gutted by fire, I never dreamt that in just six months I would be putting up shelves in a new library building. The Tongans themselves say they were encouraged to rise above their gloom and despair by the immediate support they received from Australia. Previous editions of ALL refer to individual donors.

Suffice to say that by November 1995, the Department of Justice had a new building completed, with lights and air-conditioners installed. It was one of the quickest re-building jobs ever seen, and a credit to all involved.

Assisted by the International Branch of Attorney-General's Criminal Law Division, Preen Reynolds and I went to Tonga for a week at the end of November. We had been asked to go over and install the new metal shelves, bought from S & M with AusAID funds. We were also to demonstrate and train lawyers in the use of the Info-One gift - the computer and the CD-ROMs that had been sent soon after the fire.

Two bailiffs - Poto Ricco and Paul - had been delegated to help us. They were wonderful. Apart from being nearly seven feet tall (a great advantage when installing canopy tops), they were cheerful and willing, and soon learnt the intricacies of the tie struts and the end brackets. We made a great team. We had no industrial accidents, even though I was using an electric drill for the first time.

The judges were very interested and kept coming in to watch the progress. The Chief Justice asked if this was the sort of work we normally did!

By the end of the week all the shelves were up, ready for the 80 boxes of books that would arrive on the wharf in a couple of weeks. I prepared an unpacking and shelving plan, and was told later that, aided by Sarah Walker's careful labelling and packing, it had worked brilliantly

I had a very happy fax last Friday saying the library was to be declared open by Gordon Ward, the previous Chief Justice, who had seen the library burn down the week he was leaving Tonga. He was on the Court of Appeal in Fiji, and was travelling to Tonga for the opening. Everyone's enthusiasm and excitement was wonderful to hear, they all said they had a new library even better than the one they had before. I suggested it be called the "Phoenix Library".

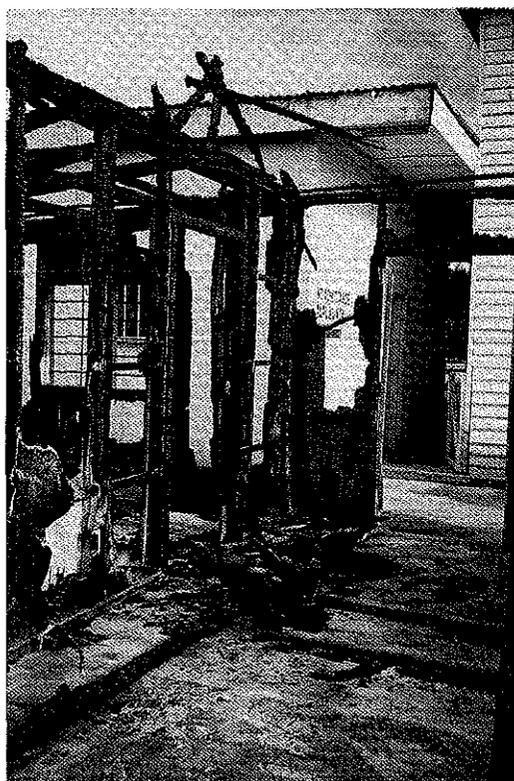
The only sour note we struck was the problem with the Info-One computer, which proved to have a faulty switch. When that was fixed we found it lacked some of the essential software. By the time the software was despatched from Sydney, our five days were up, and we had to return having done no training. Viliami in Tonga was talked through the software installation, but though everyone is very keen to start work with it, the equipment is still lying unused

This story too has a happy ending. Stephen Stout, the Managing Director of Butterworths (the new owners of Info-One), has made the wonderful offer of funding to pay for Preen to go back for two days and do all the demonstration and training that we had promised and could not do. Thank you Stephen, the legal fraternity of Tonga will enter the electronic age because of your generosity

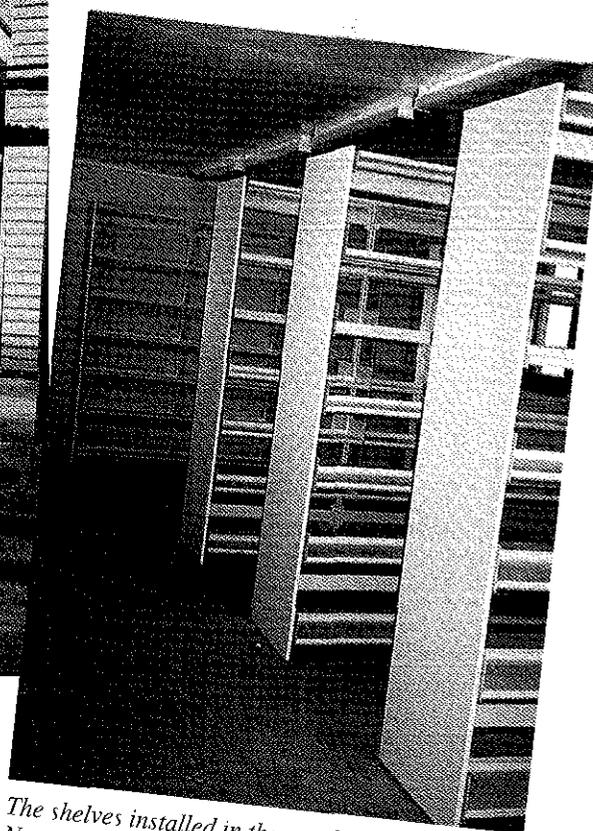
LORRAINE WEINMAN

Lionel Murphy Library

Attorney-General's Department, Canberra.



The gutted building in May 1995



*The shelves installed in the new library
November 1995*